

ANT- PATH

JOHN M. BENNETT

ANTPATH

Poems, etc.
by
John M. Bennett

Proper Tales Press
Toronto, 1984

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of the pieces included here have previously appeared in *Heavy Shades*, *Folklore*, *NRG*, *Artcomnet*, *International Bob Dylan Mail Art Exhibition*, *Artreach Newsletter*, *Lost and Found Times*, *OR*, *White Worm Review*, *Artmagpub*, *Blades*, and *Commonpress*.

Cover design by Lillian Necakov
Book design by Stuart Ross

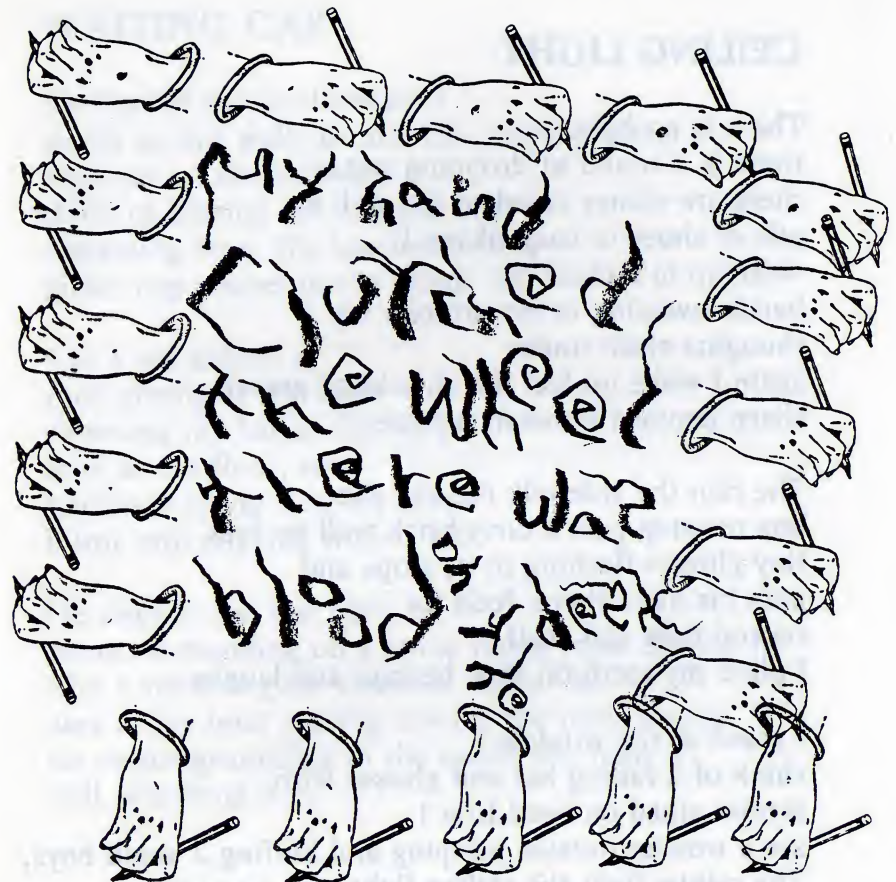
ISBN 0-9690381-8-6

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Published in an edition of 750 by

Proper Tales Press
P.O. Box 789
Station F
Toronto, Ont.
M4Y 2N7

Printed and bound in Canada
by Canadian Printco Ltd.



CEILING LIGHT

There is no light
there is a sound of dropping water
there are stones taped to the wall a
pile of shoes in back of me I
wake up in a chair my
hands sweating in my armpits my
thoughts slosh under
again I wake up feel the chunks of gravel
sharp jammed between my toes

The rain the sidewalk the sky the
boy running past a dirty brick wall he sees
tiny glitters flashing in it, stops and
puts his hand there, feels its
central hole and stuff,
I place my teeth on this, he says and laughs

I stand at the window I
think of a falling hat and glasses with
screws glued on head first I
see a woman outside jumping and knifing 2 small boys,
The ceiling light the ceiling light, she screams

My son is missing in the streets my
cleaver in his coat I
walk out to the shopping center
some shouting at the mall's far end I see a
girl running around a driedup planter he's
chasing her, blood on his face, his hands are gone

WAITING CAR

My butt is sore and sweats I
watch an ant walk around the steering wheel a
dead cat on the sidewalk I
think of kicking off its head hear
screaming from the luncheonette a
girlie mag rustles in the weeds

Can I see ahead? a
fool, sitting at the table
throwing my hat at the wall I
look at the floor, see
hammers rising next my feet a
burnt arm sticking from a pit

He slept in his seat sees
someone standing on a stone rising from the sea he
lifts a stick? a gun? a rubber snake? he
sees a tiny boat moving toward the rock, empty,
its motor grumbling in the swells the man is
still, watching it

CROWDED TIME

I stood out in the alley next a
power pole saw a
car approaching slow and quiet heard a
crow pronouncing in a tree
Why'm I here? I thought; the
garbage cans are empty the weeds are thick my
feet are on the gravel, still and hot,
I'm watching the car, its
bumper aimed at my knees a
swarm of birds behind the glass

I went inside I was
reading Time and Life saw a
photo of charred heads and hands, my
eyes swelled shut I
dreamt of water running on the roof
soggy books beneath the bed heard
pounding at the door and jerked awake
saw hatted people staring in the windows

HER MOUTH

A bus is parked in the street I
see a woman getting on I
think of her walking in the aisle, she's
looking out a window, sees me staring at her with my
hands before my eyes "Who's he?" she thinks and
raises a mirror to her lips

I'm in a dark sea I'm
holding to a beachball, see
some islands, black jagged teeth rising from the dusk,
I'm on a rock that's just beneath the surface
a man is swimming around me
I must get to the islands before it's night

NOT IN THE HALL

I see a man with saws for arms he's
standing at the doorless end of a hall a
pile of sticks and pipends slumps in a corner
I ask him "Where's the office?"
he stares at his feet he waves his saws he
looks at me his eyes whirling in his head

I turn around and walk away I
think of heat ducts ticking past my hat,
try to see a door ahead, it opens, a
lawnmower roars on the sill

I'll be heading to the office I'll
be reaching for the knob I'll
be thinking what to say I'll
be sweating my hands in my pockets I'll
be looking for my watch I'll
be asking for my seat my
sheaf of paper my heavy keys
she'll be fumbling in a drawer she'll be
lifting a knife she'll be starting to scream

He'll be standing below a light the
hall will stretch out into dark he'll be
licking his furry teeth he'll be
wanting to light a match he'll be
thinking of freeways, beaches, TV shows;
he'll lift one foot he'll tilt his head
he'll stay like that, staring at the pulsing bulb

BLANK FRIDGE

I was nesting I was trying to wake I
was tilting in the kitchen the
fridge swelling, water oozing out the base I
heard my wife jerk in bed and
felt her fluid breasts pressed against my back

I dreamed me in a camera store saw
wolves pacing on the counters, a laugh? a scream?
from behind the shelves I tried to leave I
saw trucks with knives for lights where the door should be

I was standing on a cliff the
night quiet boomed around I
start to speak my waspps zip to the void I
think of a river mirrored blue beneath the trees my
face rises from it, tongue throbbing and slick

BURIED ROOF

I was squatting in a basement my
eyes were blurred and pressed into my
head I hunching, belly squeezed against my belt I
start to sleep, my feet are
backward the floor is inside out I'm
tasting mud between my teeth

I was placing hammers in a circle I
was trying to see with them for eyes I
was standing near their center,
thought of time in lines drifting past me
through my wheel, outside my skull

Down below are soldiers leaning on a wall I
pull my finger toward my chest I
see a head explode I
start to move my tongueless shoes,
looking for a tree that will hide me

At time he cofs
lying on the floor
sucking up the
cat hair mites
dandruff - a mother

I'm brushing my teeth with
do remain in leaning
back in the tub & taking
a pee I'm thinking of
eatin' my out 2 straight
out my azz & speakin'
a bloody fance

The paper dwarf
a face stick out
the it coffe, the
the the the the

SEA DREAM

A tiny island drifts low past I
lean against the rail my
foot stuck stiff out over white
bubbles boiling through the green I
close my eyes I'm in the
engine room my hand held flat above a
thick spinning mirror shaft

My eyes are shut and glued I'm
flailing at a high sharp buzz I'm
tasting where I was, sweating in my
armpits and thighs, a long dark pool I'm
falling in I see C. standing at the edge I'm
groaning, trying to call she's slapping my ears my
shoes are backward dark shapes bolt between my legs I
start to cough I'm heading for the ladder

WORM ON THE BRIDGE

I was all day on the freeway grey
field thrumming toward me
bright teeth flash up smash past I
stopped on a bridge I
stilled there throbbing.
outside are low grey buildings
tanks smoking on the roofs a
man in metal boots crawls up one and
starts to walk in my direction
I flat my hand on my face

I see a house far up a hill I'm
walking toward it, stop next to a rusting car its
wheels stuck in rocks I
think I'm in there, sleeping on the back seat

I'm staring out the smearedup window
I'm opening the door I'm
placing my feet in the mud I
look at the house on the hill its
roof crawling with worms I
stand with the cardoor behind me
lights in the town down there,
writhing in the redlit dust

CIRCLE OF CHAIR

He sat with his pants down staring at a
mirrored filing cabinet the
windows steamed and dripped a
red light glowing in the calculator he
thought about a circular saw
turning it on and listening all day

In a room with grit beneath my soles the
door the door it's shut I try to
open my eyes they're water
flowing down my throat I think of
walls to my left with scratches,
to my right full of empty holes a
glow is forcing through the doorcrack I
turn around I'm seeing an enormous mirror my
flesh on backward the light is swelling

He was staring at the wheel rug circles
throbbing out from dark central space
the morning wormed on his crawling skin

I place my hand on the wall feel
ridges there, veins pulsing beneath my
fingers I slide my feet I
think of sinks drifting in bottomless air I
touch a switch I'm
wanting to click it but I don't

He was falling he was limping on the ground he
was standing he was walking toward the street he
was seeing his flopping shoe his wrinkled cuff he
stopped at an alley saw a block of ice smoking in a
shaft of light a charred ladder far above
across the rooftops

HIDING A HAMMER

I was laughing I was
staring at a windowshade I was not laughing I
was reaching out my hand I was
putting my finger through a hole and
feeling the wet cold glass, wind
slicing past the house I
thought of stairs circling beneath my feet my
uncut finger pressed against a blade

He was parked before the liquor store he was
seeing three men sleeping by a wall sun
stabbed his eye pale clouds
throbbed around the clock on the dash

A hammer in my pocket I'm walking to the
grocery store I'm seeing
shopping carts roll away in front of me I
stand before the peanut butter, think of
breaking glass and steel sunk in glop,
in the checkout line I watch a
woman's sweaty hair, she's pounding at the keys

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

He'll be standing high on a ladder
in his fingertips splinters a
wind pulling at his back he'll be
looking through the glass he'll
see an empty table a chair whirling before it a
column of smoke standing above the empty boards

He's crouching in a room with
4 black walls he stares to the north he
sees a concrete tree with
arms hanging from the leaves he
stares to the east: a wall of ice with
hands glinting beneath the surface he's
whirling to the west he sees a hole with
lights and shouting deep inside it; to the
south to the south he sees a giant chair
burning, a dog sleeping and twitching beneath it

He was sleeping he was
pressing his butt in the sofa he was
clawing in his dream at the ceiling he was
trying to wake he was
seeing a lurching highway
holes and cracks speeding beneath him

HORSE DREAM

I was sleeping in the back seat I
was dreaming of a line of buried bowls a
pocket knife in each I
heard the wind hissing past the doors the
shuddering blast of passing trucks a
siren yuyulating up close and away I
start awake see
insects crawling on the hood
dust sifting down the glass

I stood out on the asphalt saw
trees burning on a hill a
woman running down it naked
"My shirt my shirt" she screams some
dogs are leaping past her
twisting and biting at their backs

That night I watched TV saw
streams of hair and clotted dust blown out
rigid from the screen my
wife was scoffing at my side
"What's it mean?" "It's this" she said
holding up a can of horsemeat dogfood

ANT PATH

I was yanking off the covers
she was huddled up and shivered
I'm trying to cram the blankets in the foot
she's leaping up and stomping for the stairs

I make the bed, I'm quiet,
I listen to her anger in the
light chain pulled the
tighter scrape of chair and dropping shoe

Next AM I'm looking at a wall with
windows painted on it a
scene of beach with mounds of sand and
windy trees I turn around and
step up through the hissing doors of a bus

The grocery stores the savings and loans the
gas the runners the man in the
back seat with a carton of ant motels he's
laughing, pointing to a crowd that stops the bus;
I saw them crawling on the roofs,
throwing off chairs,
placing dogs in them,
shrieking at the falling arffs

FLOATING FLAME

I dreamed I was covered with dust and
walking to the grocery store I
went off up an alley to stare in
yards and garbage cans the sun was
high and cold the neighbourhood seemed empty
I was listening to the air ticking in the branches

At the grocery store I saw a man with
sunken pits for eyes he wore a
blue shining hat "Sky" he said
"My feet are sky"

That night I was poking at the
furnace valves, thought of
floating flames and rollaway my
heat flying up to the pulsing black of sky
I held my breath and for a second flashing
put my head in there
saw hot and blue deep inside my eyes

John M. Bennett, poet and word artist. Lots of books and chapbooks, among them these high points: *White Screen*, *Meat Watch*, *Nips Poems*, *Puking Horse*, *Time Release*, *Burning Dog*. Has exhibited word art everywhere. Edits *Lost and Found Times*, avant-garde writing and art magazine, and is Head of Luna Bisonte Prods, producer of plenty books and poetry products. Born in Chicago, 1942. Now infests Columbus, Ohio.

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